

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Libya
ACTION

7267


MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT


FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *HK*

SUBJECT: Future U.S. Relationship with the Libyan Air Force

During our years at Wheelus Air Base, the U.S. Air Force helped the Libyans get their own air force started. The rationale in 1965-1966 was that this cooperation might provide the basis for continued U.S. use of Wheelus. After 1967, the U.S. delivered ten F-5 aircraft (simple jets designed for our military assistance program in less developed countries), trained pilots for them and provided some basic maintenance.

Now that our activities at Wheelus will be terminating in June, the U.S. Air Force will no longer provide that basic support at Wheelus. The question now arises: What kind of relationship should we substitute, if any?

The Ambassador and the Defense and State Departments recommend that the Libyans be told:

- A US company (Norair) is prepared to contract with the Libyan government to provide full maintenance services for Libya's remaining seven F-5 aircraft.
 - Northrup will continue to provide spares.
 - The USG is willing to go on selling reasonable amounts of ammunition for these planes.
 - The USG is prepared to train a few (7 or less) more Libyan pilots in the U.S. at Libyan expense.
 - The U.S. will maintain a liaison unit of five USAF people in the embassy to facilitate the above.
 - The commercial sale of 2 C-130s is proceeding.
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The argument for this relationship is:

-- This approach would eliminate our direct support for the Libyan Air Force and reduce it to commercial transactions plus limited training.

-- It would maintain a minimal US relationship against the possibility that things may change in Libya. The French aircraft will not become operational in Libya even in small numbers for more than a year.

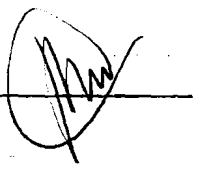
-- It would preserve a sense of some continued cooperation with the Libyan government as a backdrop for preserving as quiet an atmosphere as possible for our oil companies.

The argument against this relationship lies more in the future than in the present. This step is mainly shifting maintenance to a private contract. However, on the basis of pre-1969 arrangements eight more F-5's are scheduled for delivery at the end of this year. Following all the attention to the French-Libyan deal, going through with this delivery may well be politically impossible for us.

The question, therefore, is whether we should decide right now that we will not be politically able to maintain a serious on-going relationship with the Libyan air force and make a clean break.

On balance, there is something to be said for moving gradually and waiting out the situation a while longer.

Recommendation: That State be authorized to take the cutback position it proposes now in the context of phasing out Wheelus but be cautioned to do nothing that would commit us to shipping the remaining F-5's at year's end.

Approve 

Disapprove _____

S [REDACTED]